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ABSTRACT

An answer was sought to the question of whether there is a more precise way of placing freshmen college students in English into appropriate remedial class groups; current placements are contingent upon entrance test scores only. Subjects were selected from a certain group of remedial students who had been placed in the Developmental Reading/Composition program at Macomb Community College, Warren, Michigan. They were given a diagnostic reading test in addition to the entrance exam, and specific remediation groups were formed on the basis of test performances. After both tests were surveyed, it was decided that there was justification for using the reading test to aid in grouping. The findings also dictated that further study is needed to determine if individual weaknesses can be more positively identified from the specific areas of the tests. References are included. (Author/NH)

Abstract

- Bibliography** Remedial English Placement Pilot Study
Peggy Hambley and Lorraine Saar
Macomb Community College, Warren, Michigan
- Purpose** Determines if there is a more precise way of
placing Freshman college students in English
into appropriate remedial class groupings.
Currently placement is contingent upon entrance
test scores only.
- Method** Selection of a certain group of remedial students
who were placed into the Developmental Reading/Composition
program. In addition to the entrance exam, a diagnostic
reading test was given to each student. Groups were
formed on the basis of test performance for specific
remediation.
- Results
and
Conclusions** After an initial survey of both test scores, it is
judged that there is a justification for using the
reading test as a supportive instrument in grouping
remedial students. These reading scores are valuable
in planning a program of remediation for students
with reading deficiencies. Other findings indicate
a need for further refinement of the study to determine
if individual weaknesses can be more positively
identified from the specific areas of the tests.

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Remedial English Placement Study

Report of a pilot study made possible by a grant from the
Curriculum Research Advisory Committee and the Board of Trustees
of Macomb County Community College

Prepared and submitted by

Peggy Hambley and Lorraine Saar

September 5, 1969

Forward

The writers of this report wish to express their thanks to Mr. D. G. Nordin for his encouragement, direction, and assistance throughout the year in both the Developmental Program and this resultant study.

Special thanks to James F. Weber. Also, our appreciation goes to Dr. Edward Leibson and other members of Research and Development for help with technical data.

Further thanks go to J. Robert Thompson for his guidance and help in formulating the project procedure.

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Macomb Community College offers to students in the Liberal Arts curriculum a Freshman English Composition sequence. For those not ready to start this sequence remedial, or preparatory, courses in English are required. A study was proposed to determine if there is a more precise way of placing Freshman students in English into appropriate remedial class groupings. This study was deemed necessary because Macomb Community College must provide English Classes to answer the demands of an increasing student population which is characterized by a wide variation in scholastic aptitude.

Because this study and report are based upon current practices, a brief synopsis of these follows.

Students in need of preparatory work are at present placed at random into remedial English composition classes on the basis of their scores on the ACT (American College Testing Program) entrance test and high school record. Students whose scores in the English Usage section of the ACT fall below the 20th percentile are generally placed into the remedial English composition classes. At the time of such placement, their other ACT scores are not usually considered.

One exception is made in the placing of a certain group of remedial students into the Developmental Reading/Composition Program. This study is primarily concerned with these students. Here the student is enrolled by the counselor in concurrent reading and writing sections. To qualify for this certain group, a student's score in English Usage will fall below the designated cut-off for Remedial English and his score in the Mathematics section of the ACT will be at least 20 points higher. In addition to these particular students, others with low English Usage scores have been selected at random for this program.

In the first week of classes each semester in the reading sections (of the Developmental Program), further testing is undertaken. The Diagnostic Reading Test is administered to each student. (This test is prepared and published by The Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests, a non-profit, educational service corporation.) This procedure has been followed since the start of the Developmental Program at Macomb and these scores have been retained. The Diagnostic Reading Test is administered in this first week as a pre-test for identifying specific reading deficiencies. It is used also then as a basis for prescribing appropriate remediation for groups of students formed as a result of the test scores. (Later, students are re-tested with another form of the Diagnostic Reading Test as a post-test to evaluate the improvement made in specific areas of weakness as a result of the specialized instruction and to determine improvement. However, the resultant scores of this post-test are not used as a part of this study.)

A subjective study of the accumulated scores suggested a pattern which indicates that there is a correlation between results of the Diagnostic Reading Test (administered as a pre-test) and the entrance ACT, or (in other words) between reading (Diagnostic Reading Test) and subject matter (ACT) test scores. A pilot study was therefore proposed to see if such a correlation between the Diagnostic Reading Test total score and the ACT composite score does indeed exist. If this expected correlation could be objectively established, this study could then be considered as having established the feasibility of using the Diagnostic Reading Test as a testing instrument in conjunction with subject testing, such as ACT, in the placement of remedial students into class groupings.

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Further studies could then be initiated to measure for a correlation between the Diagnostic Reading Test total score and the scores of the four subject sections of the ACT (English Usage, Mathematics, Social Studies, Natural Science). Additionally, a more refined study could be pursued to measure for a correlation between the four subject sections of the ACT and the sections of the Diagnostic Reading Test (Rate of Reading, Vocabulary, Comprehension Skills).

By being able to identify specific reading problems and their relationship to specific subject area problems as accurately as possible, the most efficacious classroom groupings will be possible. This will enable students to realize their greatest possibility of improvement.

Before the pilot study was undertaken, a survey was made of the professional literature pertinent to reading problems of college students. Publications of the International Reading Association were examined. Books, such as those by Ruth Strang, Jeanne Chall, Donald Durrell, and Arthur Traxler, among others, were consulted. The Journal of Reading, monthly periodical of the International Reading Association, was reviewed. Unfortunately, however, material research on the testing of reading of college students is not extensive.

In the April 1968 issue of The Journal of Reading, there is a report of "Current Practices in College and Adult Developmental Reading Programs" written by Marjorie White Geerlofs and Martin Kling. This report indicates those practices and tests favored by use today. Further, this survey highlights the need for more practical methods of applying existing theories in reading to actual learning situations. Therefore, parts of the article are cited below and, for comparison, these are followed by annotations which describe practices in the Developmental Program, English 60/70, at Macomb.

Authors Geerlofs and Kling sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the objectives for developmental reading programs?
2. What are the typical materials and methods employed to meet the objectives expressed?
3. What does literature indicate in relation to the value of the objectives and the effectiveness of the materials and methods?

A questionnaire was sent to 336 colleges, universities and reading clinics selected from directories of college and adult reading improvement programs. 246 were returned. This was a 73 percent response from 46 states and the District of Columbia. 210 of the respondents reported that they were operating developmental reading programs for college students.

The procedure for admittance to the developmental reading program differed somewhat. At 41 institutions the developmental reading course was required for students who failed to achieve satisfactory scores on entrance tests. This procedure is followed at Macomb. Students cannot now elect English 60/70, admission is by referral only. This referral is established by the ACT entrance test scores of the students.

The type of program administered varied. Only 16 institutions

reported completely individualized programs with no group instruction. In addition, 17 reported they individualized instruction through counseling in class. In 190 cases, instruction was conducted on a group basis. At Macomb, instruction in English 60/70 is also conducted on a group basis in a classroom situation. The groups are established as a result of the Diagnostic Reading Test scores of the students.

Both pre- and post-tests are part of the developmental reading programs in 195 institutions. Six standardized tests accounted for 83 percent of the formal reading tests mentioned by respondents. In order of frequency of mention these were: the Nelson-Denny Reading Tests; the Diagnostic Reading Test; the Cooperative English Test, Reading Comprehension; the Iowa Silent Reading Test; the California Reading Test, 9-14; and the Davis Reading Test. At Macomb the Diagnostic Reading Test, which is ranked second above, has been used in English 60/70 both as a pre-test and a post-test since 1963.

The article continues with reports on such items as the use of class time, class size, and the preference of a book oriented class to a machine oriented class, among others. In these areas also, practices at Macomb in English 60/70 were generally in accordance with those of the majority of universities and colleges.

The authors, Geerlofs, and Kling, conclude that

"There was evidence of a need for more research

and development in several major areas. These include the development of better tests for diagnostic purposes and for the assessment of change; greater insight into the thinking processes involved in reading and the development of methods and materials to promote the growth of verbal relationships, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. Until better methods to apply theory are developed, the gap between theory and practice is likely to persist."

"As testing practices and class procedures at Macomb in English 60/70 are generally in accord with those of the majority of respondents in this 1968 survey, it was judged that an objective appraisal of test results would merit study. The data from the years of the Developmental Program was available for such an analysis.

The over-all aim of this study as approved by the Curriculum Research Advisory Committee was to establish a method of placing students into appropriate remedial English class groupings. Students who are initially selected by counselors for the remedial English classes on the basis of high school records and entrance test scores present a wide variation of reading deficiencies. The object goal of this study was to see if by using the entrance test followed by a Diagnostic Reading Test, a remedial student can be placed into a group situation that will concentrate on most effectively remediating his particular areas of weakness.

An operational plan for this proposed beginning pilot study was drawn up to see if a simple correlation exists between the Total and Composite scores. This was a necessary step before the more refined studies to determine if a correlation between the specific areas of the two kinds of tests can in fact be objectively established.

..

Test scores of students who have completed the Developmental Program were assembled for the years 1967 - 1968 and 1968 - 1969.

Data considered were those scores resulting from the entrance test and the Diagnostic Reading Test which is administered to all Developmental students.

Student population for this period is approximately 200. The students who had scores and who had completed the course, whether they passed or failed, were used for this study.

Using the composite score, the ACT mean score for all passing students in this period was ascertained. Using the composite score, the ACT mean score for all failing students in this period was ascertained.

Using the total score, the Diagnostic Reading Test mean score for all passing students in this period was ascertained. Using the total score, the Diagnostic Reading Test mean score for all failing students in this period was ascertained.

The significance and correlation of both tests was then determined and studied.

The data was processed by means of computerization by Catherine Chape from Wayne State University's Data Processing Center. The following results were then evaluated and analyzed with the help of James F. Weber and other Project Mast personnel.

ACT

Of the 142 students who passed the Developmental Program, and for whom there are ACT scores, the mean ACT score was 11.2, with a standard deviation of 10.95, as shown in figure 1.

This would indicate that 68% of the students who passed would be expected to score between 0 and 22 on the ACT Composite.

For those 53 students who failed, the mean ACT score was 5.4, with a standard deviation of 6.6.

Thus, 68% of those who failed would be expected to have scored between 0 and 12 on the ACT Composite.

In examining the relationship between the two groups of ACT scores, for those who passed and for those who failed the Developmental Program, there is a statistical significance between the two sets of scores.

DRT

Of the 142 students who passed the Developmental Program and for whom there are the DRT scores, the mean DRT score was 18.7, with a standard deviation of 15.36.

This would indicate that 68% of the students who passed would be expected to have scored between 3 and 34 on the DRT Total.

For those 53 students who failed, the mean DRT score was 8.1 with a standard deviation of 7.77.

Thus, 68% of those students who failed would be expected to have scored between 0 and 16 on the DRT Total.

Again, there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups as shown by the data in figure 2.

Correlation: ACT ~ DRT

In analyzing the degree of correlation between the ACT and DRT for the Developmental Program, it was determined that the coefficient of correlation was 0.472, which indicates no significant correlation between scores on the two tests.

In looking at the data in figure 3, however, it is seen that for the scores in the 0-10 range, 45% of the students got scores in this same category on both tests. It would appear that students who did extremely poorly on the ACT also did poorly on the DRT. In the higher ranges of scores, from 20 up on the ACT and 40 up on the DRT, there is no positive pattern to the scores attained.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the data.

Neither the total score for the ACT nor the composite score from the DRT alone provides a reliable indicator of success in the Developmental Program, although the DRT appears to be of more value.

In attempting to determine the extent of correlation between the two tests, there was no significant relationship. Closer examination, however, showed that students who scored in the extreme low ranges on one test also scored low on the other. 87 students scored between 0-10 on the ACT Composite and between 0-10 on the DRT Total score. Because of the high number of failures in this group it is clear that students who score in this range on both tests should be placed in a class grouping where intensive remediation can be provided.

It is also noted that 43 students scored between 0-10 on the ACT but scored in the middle range on the DRT Total score, between 11-30. In addition, 27 students scored in the middle range on the ACT Composite, between 10-40, but scored between 0-30 on the DRT Total. However, results of students' DRT scores in the specific areas of reading were then used to place them in appropriate classroom groupings to meet their individual needs. These scores are valuable in planning a program of remediation for students whose reading deficiencies are not extremely low in all areas.

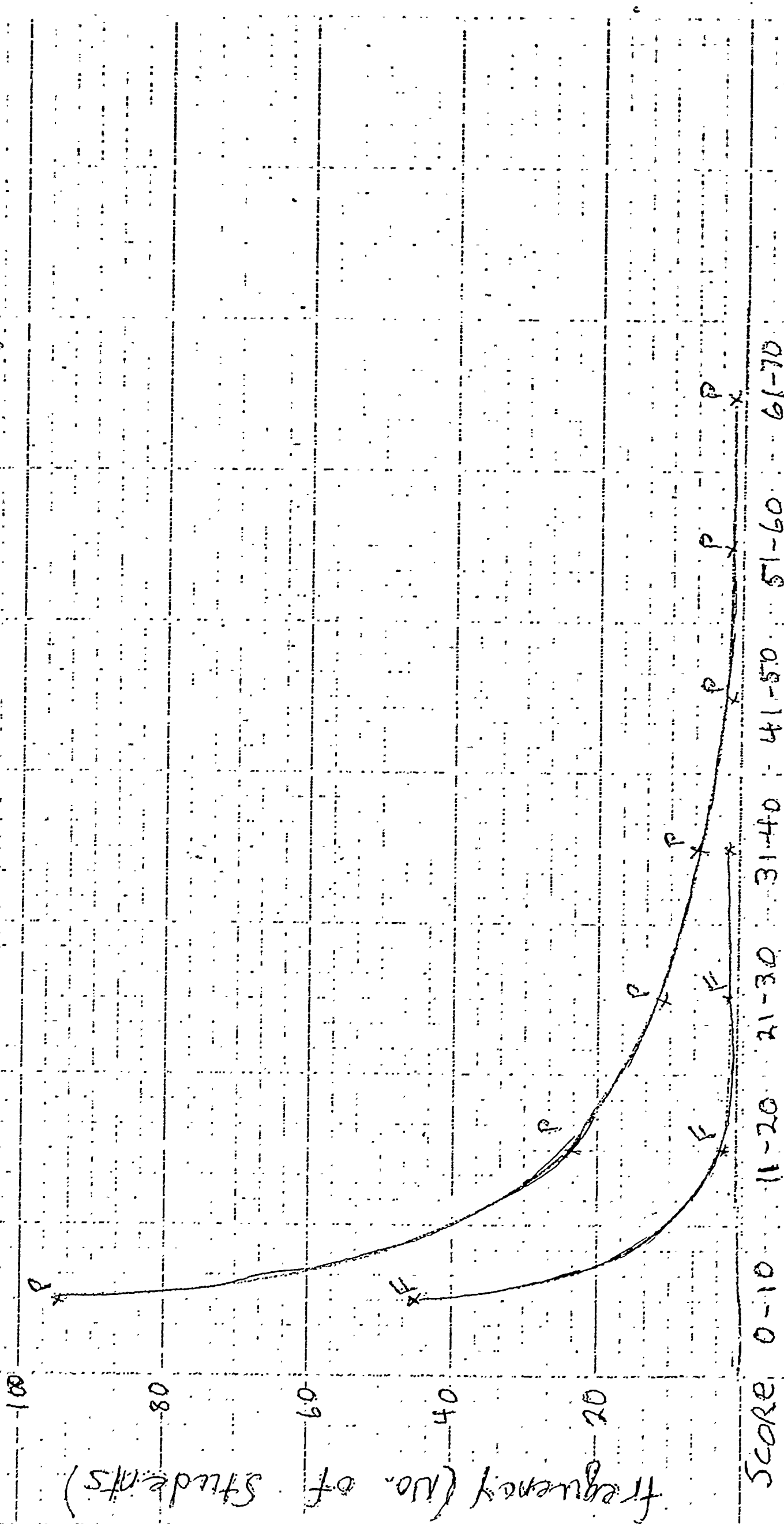
Finally, 42 students scored in the 0-70 range on the ACT, however all scored above 20 on the DRT. These students can be placed to benefit in the Developmental Program. Data shows that of the students studied all but one in this range passed.

Thus, this pilot study culminated in data which ascertained that the Diagnostic Reading Test, as a supportive instrument, can be used in connection with the college entrance examination for placement of Remedial English students into appropriate class groupings. It is recommended that the present beginning study be expanded. This research can lead to a further refinement of the method of measuring and determining if individual weaknesses can be more positively identified using the scores from the specific areas of the tests.

Students then initially selected by counseling for remedial classes can be further tested and these results can be immediately and precisely diagnosed and the student placed without delay into a classroom situation that will concentrate on remediating his particular areas of weakness. This will provide students who attend Macomb Community College with the greatest opportunity for developing their individual abilities.

Figure 1

ACT Scores of Remedial English Students

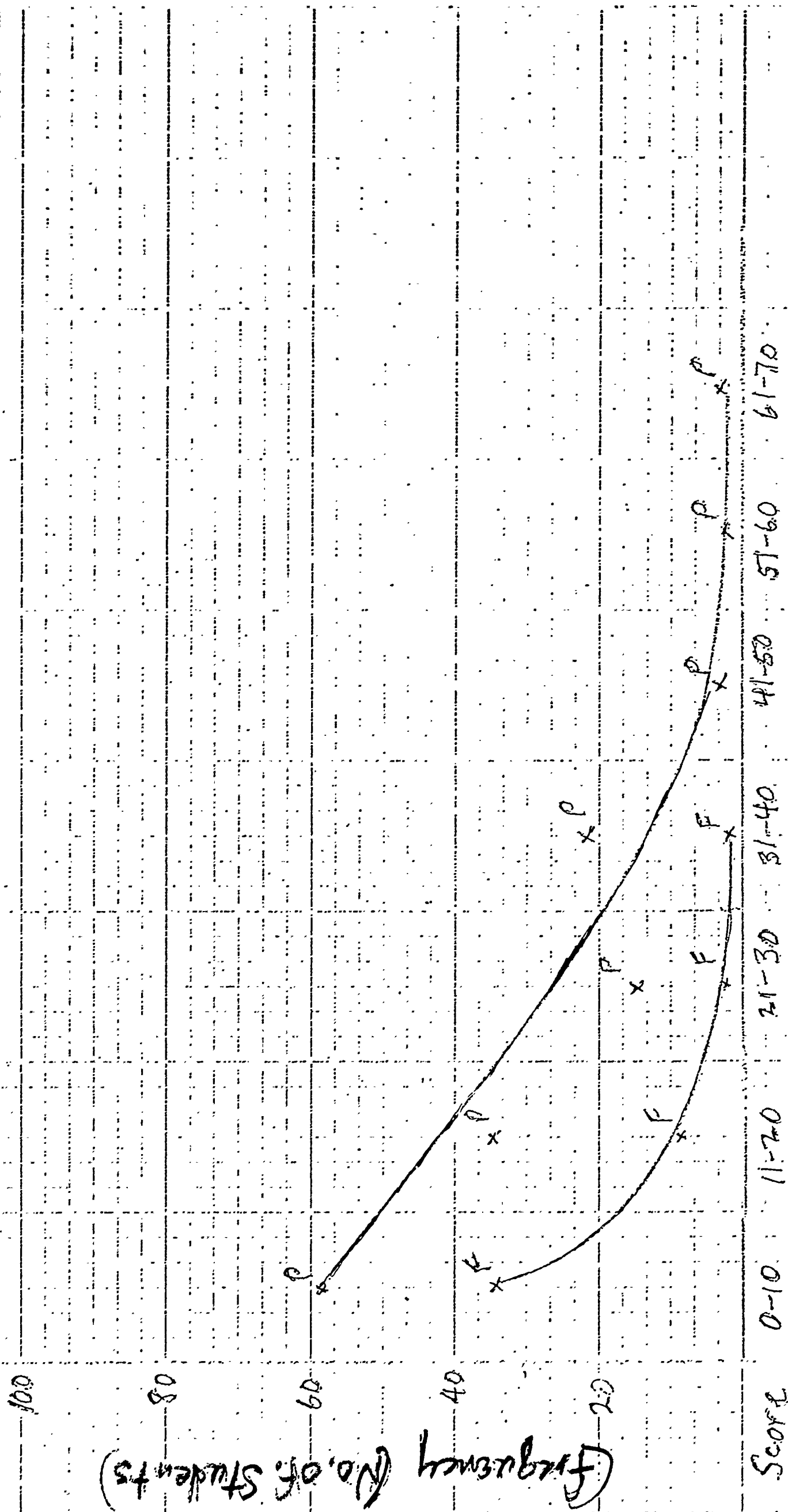


ACT Scores

(1-11)

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Figure 2
DRET Scores of Remedial English Students



DRET SCORES

100
100

Figure 3.

	ACT Scores						
	<u>0 - 10</u>	<u>10 - 20</u>	<u>21 - 30</u>	<u>31 - 40</u>	<u>41 - 50</u>	<u>51 - 60</u>	<u>61 - 70</u>
61-70	7	1	1	1			
51-60			1	1			1
41-50		2	1	1			
31-40	10	8	3	4			
21-30	12	4	1	1			
11-20	31	7	6	1	1		
0-10	87	5	1	1			1

JFH:abg
8/25/69

DRT

Authors

Mrs. Lorraine Saar

was instrumental in putting together a proposal under Title VI, Part A, P. L. 80-329, which resulted in the procuring of a federal grant for reading equipment and materials.

has written a proposal to the U. S. Office of Education for a three-year EPDA Special Project for training of higher education personnel in the teaching of reading.

has had ten years of teaching experience including three years in elementary and secondary schools. For the past seven years she had had the total responsibility for preparing, selecting, and researching reading materials for the Developmental Program of Macomb College. To do this, she has worked and continues to work closely with reading experts at neighboring universities.

Miss Peggy Hambley

holds a M. A. degree in English from Wayne State University and has been a full-time teacher in the English department since 1966.

has worked extensively with remedial students on the secondary school level. Her previous experience includes two years of teaching basic students at Berkeley High School.

has, for the past two years, been tutored by and has received in-service training from Mrs. Saar in the teaching of reading.

Mrs. Saar and Miss Hambley collaborated in preparing this pilot study which was funded by the Curriculum Research Advisory Committee and the Board of Trustees of Macomb College. The study was deemed necessary in order to begin to evaluate present Remedial English placement practices in the College.

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